

## IMPORTANT POINTS FROM HEALTH EFFECTS OF DIESEL EXHAUST

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- ❖ Diesel Exhaust (DE) is a complex mixture of gases and particles.
- ❖ Irritation of the airways is a common health effect. Irritation of the eyes is also common. Nausea and lightheadedness can also occur. These can occur from short-term exposure. Longer-term exposure can reduce lung function. DE can make allergies (like ragweed) worse and could make people more susceptible to respiratory infections. Adverse effects on the heart are also possible. Exposure to other chemicals that are irritants or carcinogens could make diesel more toxic.
- ❖ There is general agreement that exposure to diesel exhaust has the potential to cause lung cancer. What levels cause cancer is still under debate.
- ❖ The Detroit Air Toxics Initiative by the DEQ (with EPA funding) provided a risk assessment, roughly estimating the risk from diesel exhaust in the Detroit area. Risk from the non-cancer health effects are not expected to be significant. Risks from cancer could exceed 100 in a million chance of getting cancer, depending on the estimates used.
- ❖ People with existing heart or lung disease, asthma or other respiratory problems are most sensitive to the health effects of fine particles. Children are especially vulnerable to adverse health effects from diesel, especially children with asthma.
- ❖ DE contributes to air pollution, adding to increased fine particulate matter and ozone formation.
- ❖ Volumes of information are available on the health effects of DE. A good source is available at <http://www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus/humanhealth.htm>. A comprehensive document is available at that site, "Health Assessment Document for Diesel Engine Exhaust".
- ❖ For additional questions on health effects of diesel, you can contact Mary Lee Hultin, Toxicologist, MDEQ, Air Quality Division 517-373-9845

